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THE NOVEL IN THE SECONDARY ENGLISH CLASS.

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STUDENTS' APPRECIATION OF LITERATURE SHOULD BE THE ENGLISH TEACHER'S PRIMARY GOAL IN PRESENTING A NOVEL IN THE CLASSROOM, AND REALIZATION OF THAT GOAL DEPENDS UPON APPROPRIATE ADAPTATION OF TEACHING TECHNIQUES TO THE STRUCTURE AND THEME OF A LITERARY WORK. GEORGE LEVINE, IN "ON TEACHING LITERATURE" (SEE TE 000 393.), SUGGESTS THAT THE TEACHER MAY BE GUIDED BY SEVERAL CONSIDERATIONS--(1) STUDENTS' TENDENCY TO VISUALIZE CHARACTERS AS REAL PEOPLE, (2) THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN REALISTIC AND ROMANTIC NOVELS, AND (3) THE RECOGNITION OF OTHER KINDS OF "NOVELS" WHICH MAY BE SUBSUMED UNDER "ROMANCE" OR "REALISM." MOREOVER, MR. LEVINE POINTS OUT THAT AN INDUCTIVE APPROACH THROUGH WHICH STUDENTS CONSIDER THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE NOVEL TENDS TO SUSTAIN STUDENT INTEREST BY GENERATING THE SATISFACTION OF PERSONAL DISCOVERY, AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THEME ARE APPROACHED MOST APPROPRIATELY IN RELATION TO FORM. NOT ALL NOVELS REPRESENTATIVE OF LITERARY EXCELLENCE ARE SUITABLE FOR ALL STUDENTS. THEREFORE, THE TEACHER MUST EXERCISE INFORMED PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT BOTH IN SELECTING AND IN ADAPTING READING MATERIALS FOR CLASSES AND INDIVIDUALS. UTILIZING NOVELS WITH A BASEBALL THEME CAN BE ONE MEANS OF INTERESTING BOYS IN FULL-LENGTH WORKS. RECENT SURVEYS OF TEACHER ATTITUDES AND RESEARCH BY TEACHERS INDICATE MARKED AGREEMENT THAT SLOW LEARNERS NEED NOT READ ONLY HIGH-INTEREST, LOW-VOCABULARY MATERIALS, BUT CAN READ AND DISCUSS MOST NOVELS RECOMMENDED FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS. (RD)

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Methods of presenting the novel to students in secondary English classes are as varied as the themes and devices this genre employs. No matter what the method or approach, however, the teacher's main goal in presenting a novel to his students should be the same as for any other literary form - the appreciation of literature. Perhaps the best available index to the amount and nature of student appreciation of a particular literary selection is student response. In order to guarantee favorable response to the novel, the teacher will need to adapt the method of presentation to structure and theme in a given selection.

In their monograph, On Teaching Literature, the editors Edward Jenkins and Jane Hawley present an excellent essay, "On Teaching the Novel," written by John Levine. This author believes that the novel is just as important in our space age, with its emphasis on science and technology, as it was in its early history. Because the novel includes elements of adventure, comedy, personality development, and others of universal human interest, it has remained a popular literary form. In view of these factors, Mr. Levine regards the novel as "perhaps the best possible form by which to lead reluctant and television-trained young men and women into literature."

Since there are many different kinds of books that wear the label "novel," the novel has no definite form; its form varies as widely as do its themes. Hence, the novel is a difficult form to teach. The methods one uses to teach Moby Dick, for example, ought not to be the same as those one uses to teach Huckleberry Finn. Failure to adapt technique to material almost invariably results in boredom, expecially with forms as lengthy and complex as the novel. Since the novel is loaded with so many different kinds of details, the teacher obviously cannot teach everything about a given novel; he can only help his students to understand its predominant themes and to perceive the broader outlines of its structure. Reading the novel, despite any amount of classroom explication, is one activity that remains, to a large extent, an individual affair.

ED018439

No definite mode can be formulated for teaching the novel, but realizing this, Mr. Levine does make a few suggestions about the kinds of discriminations one needs to make while teaching the novel - any novel. Following these guidelines, it is hoped that the student will first perceive the novel under consideration as "a raw chunk of life" and ultimately, that he will apprehend certain interrelated aspects of its form and meaning. There are several things that the teacher should bear in mind: (1) the tendency for most students to think of the characters in a novel as real people (if handled properly, this can lead to increased interest and deeper insights); (2) students should eventually be led by the teacher to distinguish between realism and romance, that is, between realistic novels and romantic novels; (3) there are other kinds of "novel" all of which may be regarded as sub-kinds of either realistic novel or romance.

There are a few basic elements that are likely to be found in novels of any kind. Mr. Levine suggests that in class the teacher move from one element to the other until the major questions about a novel are asked, even if all these questions are not answered. In other words, Mr. Levine would recommend an inductive approach, one that sustains interest through allowing students to make their own discoveries and to enjoy doing so.

Some major questions students will ask about a work of fiction include the following: What is the relationship between the literary selection and life? (This question is tied up with character portrayal); What does the book mean? - What moral does it teach? The teacher will, of course, point out that since the book has many themes, its full meaning cannot be summarized by one "pat" statement. In attempting to answer these and other questions, the safest approaches are based on form:

1. The form that grows out of character development
2. Plot - the nature of its patterning
3. Point of view, another element that determines form
4. Repetitions and parallels
5. Theme and its effects on form

At the close of Mr. Levine's article there appear demonstrations of how these considerations may be effectively utilized by applying them to two novels often read in secondary English classes: Great Expectations and Wuthering Heights.

Some novels, though representative of literary excellence, are ostensibly unsuitable for some groups of students. The teacher must rely upon his own judgment and knowledge of his students in selecting reading materials. Miss Lois Josephs in a recent article calls to our attention some of the pitfalls of selection and adaptation with regard to the novel. In this article, titled "Teaching Moby Dick: A Method and an Approach" (English Journal, November, 1967), Miss Josephs shows that Moby Dick can be successfully taught to high school students but is careful to point out that the use of this particular novel with high school students, where pedagogical methods are poor, can be disastrous. Miss Josephs has achieved success with Moby Dick in her high school classroom by avoiding undue emphasis of philosophical, psychological and social ambiguities. Instead, she would recommend concentration on comprehension of the author's narrative method and on the appreciation of a number of isolated sections of the novel that are high in appeal for adolescents. She recommends close reading of chapter one, "Looming," and some discussion of incidents such as that in which Stubb talks to the sharks in his humorous dialect; the first glimpse of Ahab; the scene of Starbuck's struggle with himself; and the various descriptions of "Sunset," "Dusk," " First Nightwatch," "Midnight," and "Forecastle." Finally, she suggests close study of selected passages from the "Mat-maker." Miss Josephs recommends Edmund Fuller's abridgment of Melville's novel as the most valid version for high school use.

Realizing how fascinated high school students are by the adult image, Sister M. Amanda Ely, O.P., has written a rewarding article in which she relates the adult image in three novels to problems of adolescent life (English Journal, November, 1967). The novels used by this teacher are Lord of the Flies, A Separate Peace, and The Catcher in the Rye. With each of these novels Sister Ely is interested in helping students appreciate a number of interesting contrasts in the adult image and in the adolescent-adult relationship. Adults in these three novels range from symbolic representations as seen in Golding's allegory, to well-defined human beings as seen in The Catcher in the Rye. The message in these three novels is, for the most part, the same: communication and real understanding between the generations are not easily achieved.

The novel has a very definite place in the junior high school English curriculum. Among the many novels suggested for grades seven through nine are the following: And Now Miguel, The Witch of Blackbird Pond, The Light in the Forest, Shane, The Red Pony, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, The Pearl, Great Expectations, To Kill a Mockingbird. For discussions of these novels in various classroom settings and for grade-level applications for each, the teacher may consult Teaching Literature in Grades Seven Through Nine (a 1967 publication of the English Curriculum Series, Indiana University Press). This volume also contains a list of additional novels suitable for reading in junior high school English classes.

Interesting boys in reading full-length works and finding suitable material for the reluctant reader are problems old as the teaching profession itself. The teacher of English may find at least a partial solution to both of these problems in a wide selection of American novels centered around the theme of baseball. A compendious history of this theme along with some ideas for its use in the classroom may be found in an article by Ralph S. Graber titled "Baseball in American Fiction" (English Journal, November, 1967). In his novel, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, 1889, Mark Twain presented a view of the popularity and influence of baseball during his time. This is a good selection to use with junior high school students, for they will find Hank Morgan and his introduction of the game to English knights of the sixth century very appealing, especially for its humorous aspect. Since Mark Twain's day, baseball novels for adolescents and adults since World War II have developed in several directions. Many of these later novels use the baseball game only as a framework for character portrayals or problems of human existence.

Following is a list of novels which might prove especially appealing to boys:

Valentine Davis, It Happens Every Spring, Farrar and Young, 1949.

H. Allen Smith, Rhubarb, Doubleday, 1946.

Paul Malloy, A Pennant for the Kremlin, Doubleday, 1959.

Bud Nye, Stay Loose, Doubleday, 1959.

Eliot Asinof, Man on Spikes, McGraw, 1955.

Martin Quigley, Today's Game, Viking, 1965.

Charles Einstein, The Only Game in Town, Dell, 1955

The novels included in the above list represent a wide variety of types and styles ranging from fantasy to humor to realism. A number of their characters are representative of minority groups, their problems and aspirations, a valuable feature for today's inner-urban classroom. The teacher will find that the baseball novels of Bernard Malamud and Mark Harris deal with themes much broader and with deeper implications than merely a concern with ball games and the lives of players. Malamud's The Natural, (Harcourt, Brace, 1952), through its central character Roy Hobbs, explores the ball-player as a folk hero and mythical character. Mark Harris' baseball novels, The Southpaw, (Bobbs-Merrill, 1953); Bang the Drum Slowly (Knopf, 1956); and A Ticket for Seamstitch (Knopf, 1957), have as their central figure Henry Wiggin, an attractive, though uneducated pitcher, who also emerges as a mythic figure both in life and in baseball.

One way of approaching the baseball novel is chronological, tracing its development from the nineteenth century dime novel to the various twentieth century forms. The student should be able to detect how baseball literature has moved from the story told for the juvenile to the fiction which tempts the intellectual to examine literary descriptions of the game and its players for the light they shed on American life and the inconsistencies of modern existence.

On the problem of teaching literature to slow learners recent research findings with regard to teacher attitude toward the subject show a marked degree of agreement that slow learners should not be deprived of the opportunity to read and discuss novels normally assigned to their more academically talented classmates. (Consult findings of the Committee on English for Slow Learning Students and the staff of the English Curriculum Study Center, (Indiana University Press.) As a result of the findings of recent research teams, no separate literature sequence was designed for the slower students even though in many school districts it is the trend to do so. Well trained, experienced pilot teachers found that slow learners do not need to be limited to reading materials that are "high in interest and low in reading level." By their responses to such novels as The Light in the Forest, Shane, The Pearl, slow learners demonstrated that they need not be fed a steady diet of third-rate literature and watered down classics that are typical of prescribed readings for the slow track. Instead these students proved that they can read and discuss almost any novel of the quality of those recommended on page 3 of this bulletin.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: An additional supply of the curriculum guide, TEACHING SPEAKING AND WRITING IN WISCONSIN, makes it possible to distribute free of charge a copy of this curriculum to every teacher who applies while the supply lasts. Please send 15¢ in stamps to cover postage. Address Dr. Robert C. Pooley, 126 Langdon Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53702

English Journal (January, 1968), carries an interesting article, "A Novel for High School Seniors." This article presents an attractive novel by Hal Borland titled When the Legends Die. Since this novel does not usually appear on recommended high school reading lists, English teachers might find it worth reviewing for possible classroom use.